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with the sincerest
respects and regards
J. S. Sullivan

INQUIRY,

OF THE

SCRIPTURE AND REASON,

THE

CASE AND REPORT

OF THE

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY ADAM AND CARR, & CO.

25,

MARKET STREET.

1841.

AN

INQUIRY

ON THE

SCRIPTURE AND REASON

BY THE

REV. J. W. G. W. G.

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

DUBLIN

PRINTED BY RICHARD BEECH & CO

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ST. MARK'S STREET

1884

AN

INQUIRY,

ON GROUNDS OF

SCRIPTURE AND REASON,

INTO THE

USE AND IMPORT

OF THE

EUCCHARISTIC SYMBOLS.

DUBLIN :

PRINTED BY RICHARD BEERE & CO.

28,

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1824.

THE subject treated of in the following pages has long impressed itself on the mind of the Writer ; but it did not occur to him to examine it at large, until the precise question was proposed by a friend, to whose satisfaction he wished to contribute, as far as in his power. When the result of his endeavours was read by his friend, he intimated a wish to have it in a form, better fitted than manuscript, for close consideration. Another friend, into whose hands it was afterwards put, expressed the same desire. To the concurrent suggestion of those two worthy and intelligent persons, the Writer has thought it his duty to accede ; in the humble hope, also, that others of his friends may deem his attempted elucidation of so interesting a topic not wholly unworthy of their attention.

ERRATA.

Page. line.

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 15 | last, | for " that of grace," read " of that grace." |
| 21 | 19 | omit " be " after " will." |
| 28 | 5 | for " so," read " such." |
| 45 | 19 | for " its," read " the." |
| 53 | 26 | insert " had " after " what." |
| 87 | last, | for " supporting," read " supplying." |

AN INQUIRY,

&c.

AS the great body of Christians who, three centuries ago, rejected the Romish yoke, differ generally from the Church of Rome on the subject of the Eucharist, so do they also among themselves, maintain certain specific differences respecting the design and import of that sacred institution.

The principal point of controversy appears to turn upon this question : *Is the blessing, to be expected in the Eucharist by qualified receivers, a mere communication of the ordinary grace of God, obtained in the same purely inward and mental manner, as in other exercises of devotion ;—or, is there in this holy sacrament a peculiar effluence of supernatural grace, mysteriously united with the con-*

secrated symbols, so as to make them the vehicles of heavenly benediction to the capable communicant?

The maintainers of the former of these views have doubtless explained themselves, with much verbal difference, and in the earlier times of the Reformation, with not a little obscurity. But their great point of agreement seems to have consisted in their separating the sacramental blessing, in whatever manner they defined it, from the sacramental symbols, and regarding the spiritual part of the transaction as exclusively within the mind of the receiver.

Of this way of thinking were, most probably, all the Helvetic Reformers. Calvin, though accustomed to use strong language respecting the Eucharist, must still be understood to have connected the grace of the Eucharist with the commemorating act, but, in no manner with the symbols. And Bucer, who was invited into England in the reign of Edward VI. to give counsel in farther changes which were meditated in the lately established English Liturgy, was clearly and zealously of the same opinion.

Our justly celebrated Ridley, in his rejection of Roman Catholic excesses, had been led to take a different view, and no less clearly to connect the grace communicated in the Eucharist with the received symbols. His influence, there is reason to believe, had predominated in the first reformation of the Liturgy; inasmuch as in every part of the Communion Service, the idea of a blessing, strictly through the consecrated elements, is impressively conveyed. But by the advice of Bucer, the first service, after a year or two, was re-modified; and the idea of combination of grace with the symbols, had not, in the former service, been more carefully intimated, than it appeared afterward to be studiously excluded.¹

In this alteration Ridley obviously could

¹ And yet, after all, the exclusion was not complete. Probably Cranmer did not wish to carry his changes as far as would have been necessary for this purpose. The original doctrine, therefore still remained, by the most obvious implication, in the commencing sentences of the exhortation, "Dearly beloved in the Lord," &c. in which Ridley's view of the Holy Eucharist appears to be conveyed, if not as expressly, yet as substantially, and with as much simple sublimity, as it could be in human language.

not concur, though conscientious prudence restrained him from actual opposition. Most probably it was with particular reference to this very matter that he acknowledged, in a letter to a former chaplain, written during his confinement, that, in the recent times, it "had
 " chanced him to mislike some things; for" he adds, " sudden changes without substantial
 " and necessary cause, and the heady setting
 " forth of extremities I did never love." ²
 Besides, in the very last period of his life, he declared his own belief, that in the Eucharist " what was before common bread, is now
 " made a lively representation of Christ's
 " body; and that it is not only a figure,
 " but effectuously representeth his body—
 " such a sacramental mutation," he says, " I
 " grant to be in the bread and wine; which,
 " truly, is no small change; but such a
 " change, as no mortal man can make, but
 " only the omnipotency of Christ's word." ³

But it is remarkable, that notwithstanding the change in the Communion Service, those

² Ridley's Life of Ridley, p. 578.

³ Wordsworth, vol. iii. p. 237.—Ridley's Life of Ridley, p. 20.

passages of the lately formed Articles, in which the old doctrine was substantially conveyed, still remained unaltered. Undoubtedly it would have been expunged in every instance, had divine Providence allowed time for the accomplishment of all that was then meditated. But whatever were the intentions of Cranmer, they were speedily made abortive, by the death of Edward VI.

It must be observed, however, that the changes in the Communion Service, made at the suggestion of Bucer, implied the omission of the former doctrine, rather than the substitution of an opposite doctrine in its stead. The only direct intimation of Bucer's theory was given in the altered form of delivering the symbols. In the first English Service, the two commencing sentences of the present forms stood alone; in the altered service, the two present latter sentences stood alone, as substitutes for the two former. On the accession of Elizabeth, however, the two original sentences were restored, but prefixed to the two latter, as we still have them. Thus, in a certain degree, the doctrine of Ridley was again recognized, inasmuch as it is clearly intimated in the replaced words,

which must have been restored for the very sake of that intimation; while the subjoined words, which conveyed an opposite sense, as substitutes, cannot be thus understood, when merely an addition. They express a truth, but not the whole truth. When they stood as substitutes, they appeared to convey the *only* true notion, and, especially to exclude that idea, which the former words had suggested.

This re-instatement of the significant words, which for so many ages had been used in the Christian Church, had (together with the unaltered Articles already adverted to,) a stronger influence on the minds of the succeeding English Clergy, in favour of Ridley's doctrine, than its studied omission in the rest of the Communion Service could have against it. Various evidences of this fact might be adduced; but the most conclusive proof is afforded by the Prayer Book for the Scottish Church, in the year 1637. In the Communion Service of that formulary, the first Prayer Book of King Edward was substantially followed, and Ridley's doctrine in consequence avowedly maintained. Had that measure succeeded in Scotland, there can be

little doubt, that a like recurrence to the earlier principles of our Reformation would have taken place in England. But every such project was frustrated, and the entire design defeated, by the civil war which so speedily ensued. The Scottish Service Book, however, had its eventual use, in affording material guidance to the revisers of the English Prayer Book after the Restoration. The object then, evidently was, to re-infuse the spirit of Ridley's doctrine into the Communion Service. But political reasons required this purpose to be effected, not avowedly, but by significant intimations; that is, by Rubrics, enjoining certain things to be done, which had not been directed in the un-revised form, but which being now deliberately introduced after so long an omission, had a far greater force, than if they had remained from the beginning; while, on an attentive, and still more, on a comparative examination of them, their meaning will appear irresistible. Thus, without adding one word to the service itself, (a restraint which we may believe they would gladly not have felt; as their following the Scottish Prayer Book so much, bespeaks a wish to have followed it still more completely,) the revisers effected

a kind of revolution in our Communion Service, which, quiet as it was, has probably been as deep in its operation, on the feelings of the devout, as it will be found decisive in its import to the intelligent mind.

I have stated these particulars, as tending to illustrate the ground on which I ascribe the doctrine of Ridley to the existing Church of England; but to evince this fact more fully, it will be necessary to adduce the instances already alluded to, in which the original view of the Reformed Church of England had remained unaltered.

§

The 25th Article of the Church treats expressly “of the Sacraments;” and it declares them, to “be not only badges or tokens
“ of Christian men’s profession, but rather cer-
“ tain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of
“ grace, and of God’s good will towards us, by
“ the which he doth work invisibly in us, and
“ doth not only quicken, but strengthen and
“ confirm our faith in him.”

I conceive Ridley’s doctrine of the Eucha-

rist could scarcely be expressed with greater simplicity or strength than in these words. The Sacraments are said to be *effectual signs of grace*, for this reason, *because by them God works invisibly in us*; that is, the visible signs are the means or instruments by which God performs his invisible work on our minds and hearts. There is an import in the expression, *works invisibly*, which deserves attention. It implies, that the divine operation through the visible signs is not the less real or direct, because imperceptible to our bodily senses. An explanation of this mysterious transaction is, of course, not attempted; but the instrumentality of the visible signs is, evidently, made the very essence of a Sacrament.

In the 28th Article, which treats specially of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, are the following words: "The body
" of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the
" Supper, only after an heavenly and spiri-
" tual manner." This position was no doubt made in contradiction to the gross doctrine of a literal transubstantiation; but it rejects that error, not by a mere negation, but by also laying down the strict truth of the case.

“ The body of Christ ” is not said, in a general way to be *received*, but to be *given, taken, and eaten*, as if there was a solicitude in correcting the abuses of the Sacrament, explicitly to maintain the union between the heavenly and spiritual blessing, and the outward and visible sign. *This is given* by the minister, and *taken* by the communicant. To use these precise expressions therefore, respecting “ the body of Christ,” is by clearest implication to combine that “ heavenly and “ spiritual ” blessing with the *given and taken* symbol.

The same notion will be found, equally recognized in the 29th Article, “ Of the “ wicked, which eat not the body of Christ “ in the use of the Lord’s Supper.”

“ The wicked,” says the Article, “ and “ such as be void of a lively faith, although “ they do carnally and visibly press with “ their teeth, (as St. Augustine saith,) the “ Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, “ yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ ; “ but rather to their condemnation, do eat and “ drink the sign and sacrament of so great “ a thing.”

It need not be shewn how superfluous and inapposite the terms of this negation would be, if no conjunction of the spiritual blessing with the visible signs had been contemplated. It is the idea of such a conjunction only, which could make it necessary to assert, that although the wicked pressed the Sacrament visibly with their teeth, they nevertheless did not partake of the invisible blessing. But in truth, to apply the term *Sacrament* to the visible sign—to give that denomination to the consecrated symbols, rather than to the act of commemorating or communicating, would intimate, if even nothing more were said, that those visible symbols were regarded as the divinely constituted means or vehicles of the invisible blessing.

When such definite expressions of doctrine as have now been adduced, had been, through divine Providence, preserved unaltered, it is not extraordinary that the views of Ridley should have still remained prevalent, notwithstanding the omission of them in the Communion Service. It seems, in fact, that they gained strength through time; as in the reign of James I. it was thought

expedient to introduce them into the catechetical instruction of children.

In the addition then made to the Catechism, a Sacrament is defined, as an “outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.” The outward and visible sign in the Lord’s Supper is stated to be “bread and wine which the Lord has commanded to be received ;” and the inward part, or thing signified, is “the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful” in that Sacrament.

Here, it is in the first place distinctly taught, that the outward and visible sign in a Sacrament, is the means whereby we receive the inward and spiritual grace ; and we are to observe, that the term *inward* does not, in this instance, mark a quality of that grace as operating in us, (however, in that sense also, justly applicable,) but as existing in some mysterious manner, in the Sacrament itself ; for it is of *this*, that the spiritual grace

is declared to be the "*inward part*;" evidently implying, that through the divine power, the visible signs become, for our spiritual benefit, supernaturally **endued** with invisible virtue.

This virtue, in the Lord's Supper, is declared to be "the body and blood of Christ," that is, in the sublime and heavenly sense in which our Saviour himself speaks of his flesh and blood, in the sixth chapter of St. John. These are said to be, "verily and indeed taken and received" by all faithful communicants. The strength of this language has been universally felt, and to some it has appeared ambiguous. But it should always be kept in view, that the mysterious matter, thus spoken of, had already been described as an "*inward and spiritual grace*;" and was therefore to be understood no otherwise, than in that spiritual manner, of which our Lord himself has given the example. But it was thought right expressly to notify that this divine communication, by being *spiritual*, was not on that account the less *real*; that, in fact, it was a *substantive communication* from the adorable person of our Redeemer, quickening us with his divine vitality,

strengthening us with his strength, and enriching us, in proportion to our faithfulness, with all the graces which were in him.

And as such solicitude was felt to assert the divine nature, and potency of this heavenly grace, so was there no less attention to omit nothing which might impress its combination with the symbols. “The body and “blood of Christ” therefore are declared to to be “*taken*,” as well as “received by the “faithful.” The latter word would have been sufficient, had it been intended to leave at large the manner of communication. The former word consequently was used for the very purpose of suggesting that manner; for (as was remarked on the 28th Article) the word “*taken*,” clearly refers to the “given” symbol, and thus intimates the mysterious connexion between the visible signs and the invisible blessing.

I have adduced and remarked upon the above passages in the authoritative forms of our Church, not only from due respect to their weight, but because I thought I could not better elucidate the matter in discussion than by endeavouring to explain the views

of the Church of England concerning it. I add nothing to what I have already remarked, respecting the modifications of the Communion Service, effected by the revisers in 1661; because their insertions could neither be appreciated, nor clearly understood, except by comparing the service, as it had stood before, with the revised form.

I have also dwelt more particularly on the evidences of what our Church maintains on this subject, because during the last hundred years, another view has been taken, even by some, who supported the general idea of grace concurring in the sacramental act, against Bishop Hoadley and his followers; and who were accounted in other respects champions of orthodoxy.

The most conspicuous of this class, was the celebrated Dr. Waterland; who, in his Work on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,⁴ while he zealously argues for grace from heaven as concomitant to the act, seems little less anxious to repel the notion of any mysterious connexion that of grace

⁴ P. 257.

with the symbols. It is remarkable that he takes Cranmer as, on this point, the genuine interpreter of the Church of England; and though Ridley's very different sentiments must have been well known to him; he passes them over in a sort of shuffling manner, as if he did not like to meddle with them. The characteristic coldness of Waterland might very naturally have made him prefer the more general and indefinite notion; but knowingly to keep back the judgment of such a man as Ridley, was not doing complete justice either to the subject or to the reader.

A still later writer, of at least equal weight and celebrity, (Bishop Horsley) may, however, be adduced as strictly agreeing with Ridley. In one of his charges to the clergy of Rochester, we find the following passage:

“ But the frequency of the celebration will
 “ be of little use, unless your people are well
 “ instructed in the nature and use of this
 “ most holy and mysterious ordinance. If
 “ they are suffered to consider it as nothing
 “ more than a rite of simple commemora-
 “ tion of Christ's death, a mere external
 “ form of thanksgiving on the part of the
 “ receiver, they will never come to it with due

“ reverence. You will instruct them, therefore, in the true notion of a sacrament; that the sacraments are not only signs of grace, but means of the grace signified, the *matter of the sacrament* being, by Christ’s appointment, and the operation of the Holy Spirit, *the vehicle of grace* to the believer’s soul.”

§

But however clearly the Church of England, and her most celebrated divines, may have spoken, it will still be asked whether the doctrine itself can be shewn, to correspond with the analogy of the divine proceedings, and to be supported by the language of the holy scripture?

The question respecting the correspondence of this doctrine with the general analogy of the divine proceedings, must be answered by referring, first, to the most signal exercises of divine Power for man’s benefit, in the Old Testament; and next to such instances of the divine conduct in the New Testament, as may be fairly thought to accord

in their general nature with the case in question.

With respect to the Old Testament, I believe it may be asserted, that wherever a divine benefit, or blessing, whether to individuals or to the whole people, was of such a nature as suitably to admit the intervention of a sensible instrument, or medium, something bearing that character, in itself, perhaps, of the humblest nature, was almost uniformly employed. To particularize the various instances would be to transcribe a large portion of the sacred history. It may be sufficient to adduce some of the most striking examples.

It is, in the first place, worthy of remark, that in this precise way, even innocent man in Paradise, was to enjoy the blessing of immortality. Instead of possessing this privilege as an inherent property, he was to derive its continuance from eating the fruit of a particular tree; and accordingly, when through disobedience, the threatened mortality was incurred, the sentence was executed by an exclusion from that tree. It must not be omitted, that from the earliest

ages of the Christian Church, it has been usual to regard the tree of life in Eden, as a significant type of the eucharist; and in admitting this correspondence, the idea of a similar mysterious efficacy in the eucharistical symbols, for sustaining spiritual life and immortality, was naturally, if not necessarily implied.

At a subsequent period, when, in the great progressive scheme of divine beneficence, Moses was commissioned to work miracles, he was not directed to perform them merely by a word. The shepherd's rod which, at the moment of the divine call, he had in his hand, was from thence to be, not only the ensign, but the instrument of the power with which he was endued. "Thou shalt take
 " this rod," said Jehovah, "in thy hand,
 " wherewith thou shalt do signs." We accordingly find it afterward denominated *the rod of God*; and the numerous instances in which it was used, are so many exemplifications of omnipotence acting through a material medium. There was a profound fitness in this mode of proceeding, else it would not have been adopted. It obviously gave a palpability to the divine interposition, which

accommodated it with peculiar aptitude to the complex nature of man; while the simplicity of the means evinced the unseen agency, by which the effect was accomplished.

We may also observe, that not only where miraculous acts were to be performed, but even where settled purposes were to be notified, and habitual impressions produced, sensible expedients were equally employed. Thus, to give sustenance through the bodily senses to the faith and devotion of the heart, the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, accompanied the children of Israel through the wilderness; and thus, when that miraculous token of the divine Presence ceased to appear, the ark of the covenant to which it had been used to attach itself, and which was thereby sealed as the perpetual symbol of God's special residence, became the point of inexpressible attraction to every true Israelite, as the place where God was infallibly to be found, and from whence mercy and goodness were sure to flow forth upon every faithful worshipper.

The depth of this feeling might be illus-

trated by numerous examples. The care which God was pleased to take for its confirmation and continuance at the consecration of Solomon's temple, by the re-appearance of the same divine cloud attaching itself to the same ark, in proof that the same presence would reside in the new mansion, unspeakably evinced the value of such a support to faith, and such an excitement to devotion. Its actual influence on minds, the most capable of appreciating it, is manifested in the case of Daniel, who so venerated and loved, even the desolated spot which had been thus distinguished, that in defiance of the king of Babylon's edict, he persevered in praying, as he had been wont, three times a day, "his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem."

It will ~~be~~ hardly be said, that the eyes of pious Israelites were directed to the ark, as the pledge and symbol of providential, rather than of strictly spiritual blessings. An expectation of these latter is continually expressed in the devotional language of the Old Testament; and it is every where evident, that in the inmost concerns of the heart, access to God was facilitated, reliance

on God strengthened, and fixedness and concentration of mind secured and heightened by the settled assurance of his specially present Majesty.

But it particularly pertains to the main question to remark, that amongst extraordinary effects produced in the Old Testament times, through material instruments, those of a strictly mental and spiritual nature are not wholly wanting. One instance, at least, of this kind is found in the impression on the mind of Elisha, through the touch of Elijah's mantle. Elijah had been directed to appoint Elisha his successor in the prophetic office. It may therefore be concluded, that the general dispositions of the latter fitted him for such a distinction ; but he himself seems, at the moment, to have had no apprehension of what awaited him, as he was busily occupied in agricultural labour ; but as soon as Elijah cast his mantle upon him, he is drawn, as if by irresistible attraction ; and only wishes to have time for bidding his father's house farewell ; the prophet, probably, had been led to throw his mantle by a special impulse, and scarcely foresaw the fulness of the result ; for he answers, as if in

some surprize, “Go back again, for what have I done unto thee?” But it is remarkable, that that very mantle becomes again the pledge and symbol of divine blessing to Elisha. He had asked that a double portion of his master’s spirit should rest upon him; and the fall of Elijah’s mantle, while the prophet himself was carried up to heaven, appears to have been regarded by Elisha as notifying the success of his petition. In addition to what he himself had felt, he had seen Elijah divide the waters of Jordan, by smiting them with that very mantle; and as if to satisfy himself, that in possessing the visible pledge, he possessed also the mysterious power, we see him smiting the same waters with the same mantle, with the solemn and successful appeal—“Where is the Lord God of Elijah?”

§

Were the above instances to be contemplated by themselves, it might, perhaps, be thought, that such accommodation to man’s animal nature, belonged rather to the Jewish dispensation, than to the spirituality of the gospel. But this notion would be dis-

proved at once, by the slightest attention to the actual conduct both of our Lord and his Apostles.

It was right, and perhaps necessary, that when the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among men, he should manifest his divine prerogative of simply commanding nature, and being instantly obeyed. He accordingly on some occasions merely spoke, and the effect immediately followed. Thus he healed the centurion's servant, and the nobleman's son who was sick at Capernaum. Thus he stilled the tempest, and thus also he raised Lazarus from the tomb. But, ordinarily, he was pleased to act otherwise. He made use of some visible sign; and often transmitted the divine virtue which dwelt in him, through a material medium. He laid his hands on those who applied, or he permitted them to touch "the hem of his garment," and as many as touched him were made "perfectly whole." Once he touched the tongue of a dumb man with his spittle. At another time he made clay by spitting on the ground, and put it on the eyes of a blind man, whom he sent (for the obvious purpose

of notoriety) to wash it off in the pool of Siloam.

Nor was it only where corporeal blessings were conveyed, that our Lord was pleased to use a visible sign. When children were brought to him, not to be healed, but simply to receive his divine benediction, we read, that he laid his hands upon them. And in that most signal instance, when after his resurrection, he solemnly established his apostles in their exalted office, we are told, that "he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye
"the Holy Ghost."

With reference to the particular subject under consideration, this last instance appears worthy of peculiar attention. The period of types and shadows was now clearly over, and the dispensation of "Grace and Truth" had substantially begun. We may humbly conclude, therefore, that our Lord would do nothing at this time, which was not strictly congenial with all that was to follow. Yet, at this moment of immutable precedent, he employs the same method of impressive accommodation to man's animal nature. In an instance the most important and vital, he com-

municates inward and spiritual grace through an outward sign and a corporeal medium. His breath, as man, is made the vehicle of that Spirit, which, even as man, he had possessed without measure. It was the last and best blessing which his apostles were to receive from his bodily presence; and may be justly regarded as their first, strict, and proper animation with the inward and spiritual life; the first fulfilment of that promise, so lately made to them respecting the divine Paraclete, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be "in you." Here therefore, (it would seem) no less really than on the day of Pentecost, the words of his forerunner were verified, "He shall baptize you with the Holy "Ghost." On that day they received new powers: the fire which our Lord came to send upon the earth, was then *visibly* kindled; but it was at that former time, when our Lord "breathed upon them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," that they really became *new creatures*; for how else shall we account for those clearer apprehensions of the new dispensation, which their choice of a successor to Judas, and their deep and unremitting intensity in prayer, prove them to

have possessed, previously to their last signal endowment "with power from on high."

I have enlarged on that remarkable act of our Redeemer in his final intercourse with his apostles on earth, not merely because it may be thought in the highest degree pertinent to my present subject, but because its powerful influence, as manifested in so immediate a change of character has, as far as I know, been, hitherto not sufficiently adverted to.

That the apostles, from this and other divine evidences, were, in their own minds, impressed with the suitable transmission of inward and spiritual blessings, through outward and visible signs, appears from their own subsequent practice. As their divine Master, in breathing on them, had made them partakers of that Spirit which was in him; so when it became their part, as his ministers, to communicate, in measure, the same heavenly gift to others, they conferred this blessing by the imposition of their hands; and it is expressly testified, that "through the laying on of the apostles' hands, the Holy Ghost was given."

It is remarkable, that this practice of the apostles is stated without any explanatory observation; obviously, because such a proceeding, however wonderful in itself, was in so complete accordance with all of a like nature which had been formerly done, that there was no more room before-hand for questioning its fitness, than there was possibility afterward of disputing its efficacy.

§

Enough being now said, in the way of preliminary remark, it may be proper, in considering the subject itself, to begin with this natural question—In what light were our Lord's apostles most likely to contemplate the institution of the holy Eucharist, under all the impressions which we must suppose to have possessed their minds?

Our Lord's discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John, could not but be present to their thoughts; for the Holy Spirit was to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever had been said unto them. Those deeply significant words, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and

“ I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me ;” these words, I say, could not but associate themselves in the minds of the apostles, with the strictly corresponding language used at the institution of the eucharistic Sacrament ; and it would be not merely natural, but inevitable for them to explain our Lord’s words on the one occasion, by what he had so emphatically spoken on the other.

In that memorable discourse, he had clearly intimated, that his death was to make provision for that divine nutriment, which he was to furnish from himself. “ The bread from heaven,” said he, “ is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.” When, therefore, just before his entrance on the great concluding scene, he took bread, and having blessed and broken it, gave it to his disciples, saying, “ Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you,” it was impossible not to connect these words, and this act, with the corresponding expressions uttered at Capernaum. When they saw that last Paschal supper, (in itself a type of the Redeemer) formed into a new ordinance, in

which the acts of eating and drinking were to have an import, and the aliments fed upon to bear a denomination, identical with the terms of that former announcement; what could be their conclusion, but that not only the ordinance generally, but the specific acts and aliments so distinguished, were to be instrumentally conducive to that divine benefit with which they were, thus intimately conjoined?

I must venture to add, that in proportion to their high apprehensions of the blessings to be conferred, the more disposed would they be to recognize the entire fitness of such means of conveyance. It has been seen, that their minds were habituated to the transmission of such influences as were strictly supernatural and heavenly, through sensible and material vehicles. But what influence could they have conceived, more supernatural or more heavenly, than such a communication of himself, as their divine Master had warranted them to expect? The terms in which that assurance had been given, were so definite, so distinctive, and so reiterated, as to require an adequate construction, and to convey a substantive idea; and our Lord, after using

them, was pleased, emphatically to attest their high and holy import, by declaring, "the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

The promise, therefore, of our Lord's flesh and blood to be to them meat indeed, and drink indeed, to be the spiritual and eternal life of their souls, by virtue of which he should dwell in them and they in him, and they should live by him as he lived by the Father—this promise, I say, could not, consistently with the terms in which it is expressed, be understood to mean any thing less than an inconceivable, but most real emanation from his divine person, in which there would be the same exercise of his divine power, for the animation and sustenance of the soul, as when divine virtue had gone out of him, for the healing of the body. I conceive, they could have given no other interpretation than this to our Lord's prospective assurances. In the appointment, therefore of visible symbols, to be instrumentally effective in conveying the promised blessing, they would see nothing but that, which, according to all their experience, was suitable and proportionate. They would, moreover

perceive, that a two-fold communication, the flesh and blood of the Redeemer, was provided for by a two-fold medium ; the lowliness of which, only the more evinced the power of the invisible agent ; while, in such an operation, it would not appear unfitting, that bread, the prime nourishment of human life, and wine, the prime cherisher of human weakness, should be the material instruments of this heavenly purpose.

I do not mean to say, that such thoughts were likely to have occurred at that hour, when the sacrament of the Eucharist was first instituted. At no time were the Apostles less competent to have discovered the weighty import of our Lord's expressions. Probably, in the depth of that sorrow which had filled their hearts, they did not recollect the particular discourse, by which alone his language could have been fully explained. But afterwards, when the promise was fulfilled, that all things which they had heard should be brought to their remembrance, the connexion between the discourse at Capernaum and the eucharistic institution, would impress itself on them in all its clearness and importance ; and may it not be presumed,

that the more they considered the subject, the greater reason would they perceive, for acknowledging the divine goodness and wisdom, not only in the transcendent nature of the blessing thus entailed upon the church, but also in the choice of such an appropriate provision for its stated and perpetual communication.

It would be obvious to them, that if the sacrament of the Eucharist had been ordained, merely as a commemorative celebration—that is, if our Redeemer had said nothing more than “Do this in remembrance of me,” its institution would rather have implied the injunction of a permanent duty, than the pledge and means of a permanent blessing. In that view, it might have afforded an occasion for the more solemn expression of christian gratitude, or the renewal of christian obligation; but it could not be thought to give the prospect of any special spiritual benefit, beyond what might be found in an equally ardent exercise of devotion, on any other religious occasion. The ordinary grace of God might have been relied upon, for co-operation, in such an effort of the mind to think more closely on the love of

their dying Lord, or to feel it more deeply ; but, as it should seem, only as equal efforts would be assisted in the common acts of pious supplication. Yet still on this ground, it might not have been easy to account satisfactorily, for introducing into a simple commemoration any outward or visible part. The merely natural effect of the eucharistic signs on the external senses, would hardly explain their adoption in a religion, in which rites and ceremonies were so professedly to give place to spiritual worship ; and it would be still more difficult to conceive, how the eating and drinking of those visible symbols should be an essential co-ingredient, in the exercise of a purely commemorative devotion.

But in ascribing to the eucharistic symbols the instrumental effectiveness with which the significant word of their divine Master had appeared to invest them, the Apostles would see in that institution a provision for their spiritual consolation and benefit, in which all their pre-existing habits of mind were consulted, and all their mental and moral exigencies richly supplied. The nature of the eucharistic Sacrament was

clearly such, as to have in it no other virtue than what flowed into it from him by whom it was instituted. The eating of bread and drinking of wine had, in itself, neither conduciveness nor any obvious congeniality, to a spiritual purpose. It could therefore only have that precise import, which our Redeemer was pleased to give to it; namely, that it was a visible method, appointed by him, of spiritually eating his flesh and spiritually drinking his blood; and that it must accordingly derive its spiritual efficacy from the concomitancy of his omnipotent power. The Eucharist, when thus regarded, would be to the disciples of our Lord, such a pledge as was given them in no other instance, of their living by his life, being strong through his strength, and growing in grace by a vital effluence from himself.

The means otherwise afforded them, of building themselves up in their most holy faith, they would, doubtless, value and improve. But in this superadded provision, there was a source of satisfaction peculiar to itself. In all other exercises of religion, the mind was to contribute its own exertions; and though subordinately, yet directly, to

minister to its own benefit or comfort. In the eucharistic institution alone, human co-operation could have no share in the effect ; because the medium employed could communicate influence or blessing, only through the direct operation of Almighty Power. It was not to be questioned, that in every instance in which spiritual benefit was conferred, the goodness of God was to be regarded as its supreme source. But where the rational powers of man intervened, whether those of the recipient himself, or of any human helper of his faith, the sensible advantage would seem, more or less to resemble the blessings of nature and providence, which are apparently the result of general laws. It might therefore have appeared as reasonable, as it was gracious, that for the perpetual comfort and assurance of the Church, in the highest and noblest instance in which divine blessing was to be conferred, the supreme source of that blessing should condescend to be its direct and immediate dispenser ; and should prove himself to be such, by employing means of communication, which, venerable and impressive as they should become, by being made, not merely the instruments of his power, but the effec-

tual representatives of himself, ⁵ would be not only weak but fruitless, in any other hands than his own.

If we may believe these views to have presented themselves to the minds of the Apostles, we must also suppose them to have been heightened in their effect, as far as that was possible, by the pre-existing habits already adverted to.

It must be remembered, that the Jewish religion was not wholly typical; on the contrary, it contained much, which was naturally and intrinsically attractive and endearing. Above all, the special presence of God in his holy temple, held a place in the mind of every pious Jew, for which nothing but a full equivalent could compensate. We are to observe, that there was nothing in that presence, except the limitation to one exclusive spot, which savoured of an imperfect dispensation. It was not to the infancy of human nature, but to human nature itself, that this instance of divine condescen-

⁵ "He that eateth *me*, even he shall live by *me*."

John, vi. 57.

sion was engaging. That presence had, indeed been for ages, as much a matter of faith, as the glory of God in heaven; but it was not the less apprehended, as an invaluable and delightful reality. This it was, which made the Mount Sion attractive to every devout Israelite; which induced the inspired Anna not to depart from the temple; which detained the child Jesus, when Mary and Joseph had departed from Jerusalem; ⁶ and which afterward roused his holy zeal to an intensity, never manifested on any other occasion.

Had nothing parallel to that grace and glory of the Old dispensation been retained in the New, a want might have been felt, which all its other benefits would not have supplied; but, in the Eucharist, as seen in the light of our blessed Saviour's words, there was the imperishable pledge of an equally glorious, but far more gracious presence; a presence, not confined to a single

⁶ It would seem that our Lord's answer to his Mother and Joseph, St. Luke, ii. 49. might most fitly be rendered, "Why is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in the house of my Father?"

spot, but to be realized, in our Lord's appointed way, wherever his word should be received, and his church established; a presence, not merely to be approached with confidence of being heard, and mercifully regarded, but with which, an incomparably nearer communion was to be vouchsafed; and from which, an inexpressibly more efficacious influence was to be communicated, than, in the former dispensation, could even have been conceived.

All, therefore, and far more than all, that the Ark of the Covenant had been to pious Israelites, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, must, on the grounds which have been stated, have appeared to the Apostles and their initiated disciples. Our Lord's assurance to them, in general terms had been, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" and a still more consolatory promise had been given—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The eucharistic institution, understood as has been stated, would necessarily imply the most substantial fulfilment of those comprehensive declarations. However otherwise

the great head of the Church should be present with his members, he must then be specially present with them, when he gave them spiritual life and nourishment from himself.

In the very idea of such a communication, there was something so sublime and heavenly, that the more it was dwelt upon, the more it would fill the mind with all the impressive results to which it led. And it might not be too much to say, that the pillar of cloud, or of fire, could not have been to the senses of the Israelites a surer token of the special presence of Jehovah, than the consecrated symbols in the Eucharist were, to the minds of the Apostles and their fellow-christians, of an equally special, and much more endearing and effective presence of the incarnate Word. In this ordinance they would see a mercy-seat as sensibly established, as in the former dispensation; but with far nobler hopes, and better promises: and in the light of our Lord's infallible words, it would place before their mental eye a Shechinah, as real as that which had visibly possessed itself of the holy of holies, at the dedication of Solomon's temple. In witness-

ing our Lord's institution of the Eucharist, and his divinely significant consecration of its symbols, they had seen and heard what was far more than equivalent to that earlier manifestation. They would rely on the faithfulness of their omnipotent Lord, at all times, and in every instance, to verify his own words, by making the eucharistic elements to be *effectually*, what he had named them; and in this assurance, they would contemplate him, as not less graciously and influentially present in those holy mysteries, than he had been personally present in those interviews, with which he had favoured them before ascending to his throne of glory in the Heavens.

§

I have thus ventured to suppose, as matter of moral certainty, the estimate of the Eucharist which would be made by the Apostles, under the mere guidance of our Saviour's expressions. But I am ready to acknowledge, that the force of this argument may not be felt to imply actual demonstration; and that its success will only be in proportion to a certain mental pre-disposi-

tion. Many will, doubtless, still ask, if these things are so, why has not this view of the Eucharist been expressly given in holy Scripture? If such had been the judgment of the Apostles, might we not expect to find an explicit declaration of it, in some part of the Apostolic writings?

This question would be reasonable; but the answer is easy, since, through the wisdom of heaven, St. Paul has been led by certain irregularities among the Corinthians, so to speak of the Eucharist, in his first epistle to that church, as to place the Apostolic doctrine beyond possibility of doubt.

It appears that many members of the Corinthian church had defiled their Christian purity, by participating in feasts celebrated in heathen temples, and consisting of viands, which had been offered at the shrine of idols. Of this practice, as might well be supposed, St. Paul speaks with horror; but it is very remarkable, that in his expostulation, he dwells, neither on the sanctity inherent in the Christian character generally, nor on the spiritual privileges and blessings so often the subject of his discourse: instead

of this, he urges his charge on the single ground, that the mysterious sanctity of the Lord's Supper was grossly and dangerously profaned, by any intermixture, in its recipients, with the table and the cup of demons.

The Apostle commences, by adducing the case of the ancient Israelites, whose special relation to God, he so describes, as to evince the close analogy between their peculiar circumstances and those of Christians generally, in point of characteristic distinctions, and of the Corinthian Christians particularly, in point of crime and punishment.

The analogy in characteristic distinctions, he thus intimates, "They (the Israelites)
 " were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud
 " and in the sea; and they did all eat the
 " same spiritual meat, and did all drink the
 " same spiritual drink; for they drank of
 " that spiritual rock which followed them;
 " and that rock was Christ."

It need not be remarked, that in this exordium, St. Paul, as if with all the skill of a master in discourse, lays a ground for making the holy Eucharist his theme. But does he

not do more than this? Does he not, even already, intimate the specific view, which he took of that ordinance, and in which he meant to represent it? The Israelites, he would have it understood, resembled Christians, in having been sustained with spiritual meat and spiritual drink; that is, evidently, with meat and drink, which had in their nature and substance, something supernatural and divine. But what, by consequence, does this pointed parallel imply respecting its Christian counter-part? It was, surely, far from St. Paul's thoughts, to give to the type the greater, and to the anti-type the lesser glory. It follows, therefore, that in so designating the sustenance of the Israelites, he intended to convey, even beforehand, a like idea of the eucharistic symbols; these, he implies, are also spiritual meat and spiritual drink; that is, have in them a transcendent quality, similarly supernatural, and divine.

After an enumeration of instances, in which the Israelites had signally transgressed, and were as signally corrected, the Apostle enters directly upon his subject, and in the first place appeals to the settled be-

lief of Christians, universally, respecting the nature of the Lord's Supper, "The cup of blessing," says he, "which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

This interrogatory form deserves particular notice; it implies, that there was already such unanimous consent in the Christian church, respecting the nature and import of the Lord's Supper, as only to make it necessary to take for granted the matter of that belief. Let, then, the terms of the Apostle, thus deliberately and decisively applied, be attentively weighed; he does not give a general estimate of the Eucharist, as being the most important and appropriate act of Christian devotion; but he distinctly and emphatically specifies ~~the~~ the mysterious character and efficacy, which the material elements of bread and wine acquired, by their consecration to the holy purpose for which they were appointed.

In a word, according to the Apostle, and that universal belief to which he appeals, the commemorative celebration of the Eu-

charist, as a devotional act, is not that which makes it peculiarly beneficial and venerable; but it is so, because in this ordinance, the aliments which Christ has appointed, become, through his designation and blessing, the direct vehicles of his own divine influences to capable receivers. Nothing short of this notion would accord with the ascribing of spiritual virtue, specially to each visible sign; and, what is still more, to each, not as becoming efficacious through *the act of receiving*, but as endued with efficacy through *the act of consecration*.

For, we must observe, it is not “the cup of blessing which we *drink*,” nor “the bread which we *eat*,” that are declared to be the communion of the blood, and the communion of the body of Christ; but it is said, “the cup of blessing which we *bless* ;” “and the bread which we *break* ;” clearly indicating, that the eucharistic elements, when once solemnly sanctified according to our Lord’s appointment, are to be regarded as being, in an inexplicable, but deeply awful manner, the receptacles of that heavenly virtue, which his divine power qualifies them to convey. — On such a subject it would

be presumptuous to indulge in any hypothetic speculation. But it would be still more blameable, and at least as prejudicial, not to allow to the Apostle's words all their due import; especially as those very words contain the only direct definition of the Eucharist in the sacred writings.

If the language of St. Paul could need elucidation, it might be strictly compared with the several expressions of our Lord, already adverted to; but these must, of themselves, recur; and, at once, fix the unequivocal, however mysterious import of *the communion of his body*, and *the communion of his blood*. In this accumulated light, it must be felt impossible, that the thing signified should be disproportioned to the force of the expression; and the conclusion, on the whole, must inevitably appear to be, that as our Lord had taught his followers to expect from his divine person, such influences of his body and of his blood, as should be not figurative or illusive, but substantive and vital, and as in his institution of the Eucharist, he constituted the consecrated bread and wine, the virtual representatives of his body and blood, and by consequence

the effective vehicles of their influences to all capable partakers, so, what our Lord had thus declared, and thus established, is comprehensively contained, and as if solemnly countersigned, in the clear and authoritative recognition of his Apostle.

But even this emphatical passage is only a part of what St. Paul has delivered on the subject of the Eucharist. As, in the wisdom of God, it was on this occasion alone, to be directly the theme of discourse, so, accordingly, the Apostle seems anxious to leave nothing unsaid, that could illustrate the doctrine, or enforce the consequent duty. Having, therefore, by his interrogatory appeal, called attention to the profound and awful nature of the Eucharist, he proceeds to argue from the case of Jewish sacrifices, with what cautious veneration this Christian mystery ought to be treated. "Consider " Israel, after the flesh," he says, and asks— " were not they who ate of the sacrifices " partakers of the altar?" The argument is brief, but the inference cannot be mistaken. The Apostle clearly implies, that the same kind of sanctity, which had been ascribed to things offered on God's altar, under the old

law, was now to be ascribed to the eucharistic symbols. That sanctity, he intimates to have been given to the Jewish sacrifices by the altar on which they had been offered; according to our Lord's declaration, that it is "the altar which sanctifieth the gift;" and such he conceives to have been the communication of sanctity to the matter of the sacrifice, that the partakers in the one, participated also in the other. Such then, he would have it understood was, strictly in its kind, however more spiritual in its purpose, the sanctity derived by the eucharistic symbols from their high designation, and through them conveyed unto the persons of those who partook of them.

That this was, distinctly, St. Paul's meaning, is confirmed by the design which he had in view; namely, that those Corinthians, who had frequented idolatrous banquets, might be awakened to a full sense, not only of the gross profaneness, but also of the personal danger of their conduct. On this particular point he proceeds to enlarge. Even already however, he has said enough to shew, that in his judgement, a divinely effective virtue became, through consecration, myste-

riously united with the Eucharistic symbols, and was, through them, communicated beneficially to capable receivers ; and, as it should seem, in some such awful manner to *every* receiver, as to make his contact with any unholy thing, a matter not less of peril to himself, than of insult to the majesty of heaven.

In continuing his expostulation, the Apostle retains the idea of sacrificial communicative influence, and applies it to that criminal intermixture which it was his immediate object to reprobate. "The things," says he, "which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God, and I would not that ye should be communicants of demons." ⁷ Such, therefore, is his deduction, merely from the contrariety between sacrifices to God and sacrifices to demons. But the particular subject of which the Apostle was treating, called for yet stronger denouncement ; he, therefore, im-

⁷ As before in the 18th verse, the Israelites, by eating the sacrifice, were *κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου*, so in the 20th verse, the Corinthians, by eating idol sacrifices, are *κοινωνοὶ τῶν δαιμονίων*.

mediately adds—"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy! are we stronger than he!"

The strength of these expressions is remarkable. It seems as if they were intended to convey all possible awfulness of admonition; "*ye cannot*" do it, says the Apostle, as if he meant to pronounce, that there was some provision in the invisible world, as certain in its operation as the laws of nature, in readiness to avenge such profanation; to which mysterious vengeance they would infallibly expose themselves, should they neglect his warning. But on what does he rest the certainty of that result? Not on the moral contrariety of the two acts, however real or extreme, but strictly, on the opposite import and effectiveness of the two cups, and of the two tables, as being respectively the mediums of communion with the Lord, and of communion with demons.

It is, in fact, the profane and unnatural mixture of things the most sacred, with things the most unhallowed, in this visible

world, and that in their own persons, with which St. Paul charges the Corinthians; and as if he himself was struck with inexpressible horror at the outrage to Omnipotence itself, which such enormity involved, he gives his feelings vent in an appeal to all that was impressible in human nature, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy! are we stronger than he!"

It was not possible to add greater weight to all that he had spoken, than by this interrogatory. The Jewish high priest could not have given a more terrible warning to some daring intruder into the Holy of Holies. The words are awful; they are as pregnant in meaning, as they are resistless in force. They attest the feeling with which St. Paul had spoken, and guard his words against even the possibility of a figurative construction. And here, for the time he drops the subject, perhaps that an interval for reflection on all he had just said, and especially on his last most awful expostulation, might the better prepare the minds of those to whom he wrote, for what was yet to come.

He had, in fact, another enormity to com-

plain of, and for that purpose he reserves what is, most strictly, the sequel of his former discourse. He had ended, in the first instance with the judgements of God, as matter of awful apprehension. From this point he proceeds, when in the next chapter he brings his second charge against them, respecting the Eucharist ; namely, that of treating it with disrespect in the very act of celebration. In his animadversions on this flagrant violation of Christian duty, he appeals to their own experience for frequent verifications, even already, of that tremendous menace, by which he had, as it were, rivetted and sealed his preceding remonstrance.

That he may the more surely gain his purpose, he first lays the strongest possible ground, by reciting the record of the Eucharistic institution, not only as received by him from the report of his brethren, but as directly made known by divine revelation to himself. After repeating those quick and powerful words, which had given imperishable dignity and virtue to that bread and that cup, as implying the shewing forth of the Redeemer's death, as well as (what ^{had} been before dwelt upon) the communion of his

body and blood; he thus proceeds in his admonition—"Wherefore, whosoever shall eat
 " this bread, or drink this cup of the Lord,
 " unworthily, shall be guilty of the body
 " and blood of the Lord. But let a man
 " examine himself, and so let him eat of
 " that bread and drink of that cup. For he
 " that eateth and drinketh unworthily,
 " eateth and drinketh judgement to himself,
 " not discerning the Lord's body."

I have quoted this passage at large, that I may call attention to the closeness with which the Apostle adheres to the idea of the distinct and specifical elements, rather than to the general act of commemoration or communion. There is a kind of physiognomy in language, by which we seem to see, as well as understand, the mind of the writer. Thus, in the passage now transcribed, we not only receive the instruction intended to be conveyed, but in the precision of the terms, the strictness with which they are adhered to, and the energy with which they are applied, we have, as it were, the very stamp and signature of St. Paul's own mind and heart. Not only from first to last, does he keep the eucharistic elements in his view,

but he says nothing which does not expressly refer to them. Thus, as the crime is eating or drinking unworthily, so the punishment is the *eating and drinking* of judgement, (that is, of bodily infliction,) as if the very receiving of those holy things into the human person, when defiled by polluting contact, or desecrated by actual irreverence, produced of itself (like the Ark of the Covenant when profanely treated) the calamity, or destruction of the offender. Again, the desecrating irreverence is stated to arise from not discerning *the Lord's Body*; that is, from approaching the sacramental symbols, without due discrimination of their transcendent quality. In this awful designation of the matter of the sacrament, the Apostle seems to have thought his subject carried to its height. What more, in truth, could even St. Paul have added, either for the correction of the Corinthians, or for the instruction of all succeeding Christians?

He therefore merely strengthens what he has said, by referring to those divine judgments, which had been already inflicted. "For this cause," says he, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

The Corinthians themselves, had probably been suffering these calamities, without adverting to their actual source. But this awful explanation would at once lead them to compare their crime and punishment with those signal cases of a like nature, recorded in holy scripture ; with that, for example, of Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire on God's altar ; with that of the Philistines, who brought the ark into the house of Dagon ; with that of the Bethshemites, whose profane curiosity led them to look into the ark, and who became the victims of their own presumption ; and with that of Uzzah, who drew his own instant death from the ark, by an inconsiderate touch. They must, at once, have seen and acknowledged, that what was just and necessary in those ancient instances of divine chastisement, must be accounted equally just and necessary in the case then existing ; since every reason that could be conceived, for fencing the symbols of divine presence and power under the Old Testament, must hold good, for an equal fencing of similar symbols, under the New Testament. It could not, for one moment be imagined, that either the altar, or the ark of the Lord should be guarded by more terri-

ble majesty, than that which, on equally divine authority, was to be “discerned” as “the Lord’s Body.”

But does not the awful warning respecting “eating or drinking unworthily” intimate, by parity of reason, or rather on a still surer ground, the divine potency of the elements to all qualified receivers? For, if to eat or drink unworthily, is to eat and drink divine malediction, then no less surely, to eat and drink worthily, is to eat and drink divine benediction. It is evidently, according to St. Paul, the mysterious sanctity of the thing unworthily received, which makes it the vehicle of vengeance to him by whom it is profaned. But if the sacred symbols be thus endued with a supernatural influence to avenge their abuse, they must possess a like supernatural influence, where they are duly and reverently received, to benefit and bless the receiver. In fact, we must conclude, that it is their being divinely fitted to bless, which alone could give them an avenging power when profaned; and consequently, that the Apostle in adding this last distinct and emphatical declaration, confirms all that he had said before, and puts the Christian

doctrine of the Eucharist beyond the possibility of question.

To understand the mysterious term of the Lord's Body in any such gross sense as has been fancied in the Church of Rome, would be to overlook our Redeemer's expressions, already in part quoted, "It is the spirit which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

But, let us not therefore, rush into an opposite extreme; nor treat the words of an inspired Apostle, as we would not treat those of any common intelligent writer. Let us observe, that every expression St. Paul uses, tends, as it were more and more, to invest the sacramental symbols with an ineffable measure of derivative dignity and instrumental virtue. He gives no shadow of pretext for any carnal interpretation; but he says all that could be said, to make us regard "that bread and that cup," not only as the visible pledge, but the effective organ of a vital communication from the invisible, but then specially operative, and therefore specially present, Redeemer. For he

alone it is, who could make those symbols to be, in virtue and efficacy, his body and blood.

In thus explaining the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Apostle most truly tells us a mystery; but a mystery which (as has been observed) the first Christians were prepared by every divine analogy to receive; and which could scarcely need vindication in these latter times, if the zeal of contending Christians did not so generally neglect all truth, even of holy scripture itself, which does not directly serve as a weapon against the error, real or supposed, which they are anxious to refute, or as a support to the particular theory, which it is their purpose to maintain.

On this account chiefly, rather than because laboured elucidation was at all necessary, have I dwelt so long on the Apostle's expressions. I have not wished to add anything to their strength, much less to turn them from their intended aim. I have merely been anxious, by the minutest attention, and the most sober consideration, to elicit from them their precise and entire

meaning; especially as it has pleased the divine wisdom, that these passages of the 10th and 11th chapters of the first Corinthians, should be the sole instance in which the doctrine of the Eucharist is infallibly stated and explained.

§

But, perhaps, it may still be doubted, whether it be essential to the due estimation and beneficial use of the Lord's supper, that the Apostle's expressions should be as literally interpreted, as they have been, in the preceding observations; and whether he may not be considered as, in some measure, employing a figurative mode of speech, to which it will not be unreasonable to give a proportionally qualified construction.

To this I would answer, that in every passage of holy scripture, as well as in that more immediately in view, it ought to be our first care to ascertain, in what manner the divine speaker or writer means to be understood? If, in a figurative manner, some key will assuredly be given us, whereby to arrive at the simple and solid sense.

This, perhaps, will be intimated in the very terms which are used, by the obvious impossibility of any other interpretation; or, at least, the context will afford such light, as to explain the import, if not also to illustrate the fitness, of the metaphorical expressions. It would be easy to produce examples; but the passage particularly before us, could, on no reasonable ground be included in them: for I conceive it would be impossible to point out one strictly figurative term in the entire discourse.

A figurative term is that, which, by substituting some other term or terms, may be translated into plain language. But if the expressions of St. Paul respecting the Eucharist be tried by this rule, their import, be it ever so mysterious, cannot be proved metaphorical. For instance, what plainer terms could we pretend to substitute for *the communion of the blood* or *the communion of the body of the Lord*? Nay, the very term of *the Lord's body* is so used by him, as infinitely to transcend all attempts at adequate explication. When the Church of Christ is called his body, we see at once that it is a figure, from our acquaintance with the sub-

ject thus denominated. But when we read of the Lord's eucharistic body, we read of something not otherwise made known to us; and therefore cannot similarly resolve its import into a plainer notion; which will be no less the case with our Saviour's several expressions already adverted to. To weigh the consonant terms of our Lord and his Apostles with sobriety and humility, will be to feel, that they unitedly assure us of a heavenly and spiritual reality, divine in its source, infallible in its efficacy, inconceivably venerable in its nature and character, and no less dreadful in its profanation. What is said therefore on this subject, is not figurative, but it is mysterious and transcendental; because, obviously, the thing signified rises, not only above the language, but the conception of man. St. Paul had learned what he delivers, he tells us, by revelation; most probably when he was caught up into paradise, and heard "unspeakable words." When, therefore, the Apostle speaks, as in the instance before us, of that which is heavenly and divine, we must, in reason believe, that however exalted his language, the matter of which he speaks is incomparably more exalted; and that if we

would do justice to him, to the subject, and to ourselves, we must understand his terms in the fulness of their import, as even then, we shall only see by means of a glass, obscurely; and therefore, be liable through the least aberration of our mental vision, either to see delusively, or not to see at all.

§

But, may it not be apprehended, that the ascribing of such instrumental importance to the material elements of bread and wine, as the literal interpretation of St. Paul's expression would imply, involves an inconsistency with that purely spiritual character, which is regarded as the great distinction of the gospel dispensation?

To this it might, with reason, be answered, that in forming our notions of the gospel dispensation, we are not to trust to any general conclusions, however plausible, but simply to its own representations of itself. From these we shall learn, that though the gospel is purely spiritual in its ends, the means which it employs are most wisely adapted and proportioned to the mixt na-

ture of man. It is the exquisiteness of this accommodation, which constitutes the most conclusive internal evidence, that the author of Christianity needed not that any should testify to him of man, in as much as he knew what was in man. To a creature consisting, not of spirit only, but of soul and body also, how disproportionate would have been a scheme of moral improvement, much more of moral disenthralment, adapted exclusively to the highest portion of his nature?

But the fact is, that the gospel commenced in an accommodation to man's animal exigencies, which was as admirable as it was gracious, and which the hosts of heaven contemplated with delight and wonder. The incarnation of the co-eternal Son, through which St. John was enabled to declare, what he and his fellow apostles "had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon, and their hands, had handled of the word of life," was, in the first instance, so to consult human nature in its animal and sensitive capacity, as to give the strongest pledge, that a dispensation thus introduced would, in every subordinate provision, mani-

fest the same spirit, and operate on the same principle.

For, could it be thought that the first wonderful accommodation of Godhead to the sensitive apprehensions of man, should be wholly temporary, and that though that mystery of godliness was ever to be regarded as the vital source of all spiritual benefits and blessings, no continuance of this wise and gracious condescension should be manifested in the means whereby its results were to be perpetuated and made effectual?

May we not rather conclude, that on the same wise and gracious consideration, which induced the divine nature to enshrine itself in a human person, that through that medium there might be a more familiar, more impressive, and more engaging communication of God with man, it would be deemed by the divine wisdom and goodness, most suitable to man's natural feelings and conceptions, to convey to him the special influences of incarnate Deity, through a medium similarly adapted to his imagination and his senses? And when we believe, as

if we are Christians we must believe, that he who was God over all, united himself to so low a thing as human flesh, in order to become the fountain of those influences, we surely need not question the credibility of his conveying those influences through any other work of his own hands, which he saw it fit to appoint. When he had condescended to imbody himself in our flesh, that he might, more conformably to the laws of our nature, give spiritual life to the world, and when he was establishing a perpetual ordinance expressly to represent that primary mystery, and to subserve its purpose by instrumentally communicating its virtue, was it either unsuitable or improbable, that the heavenly grace, to be thus communicated, should be, as it were, imbodyed in two of the purest and simplest provisions, which, as Creator of the world, he had given, for the sustenance of our animal life, and the refreshment of our animal weakness?

§

The expediency of such a method, as peculiarly fitted to impress the mind of man,

is illustrated, (as has been observed) by all the analogous instances already adverted to. In no case could the divine power itself have required any medium of operation; and therefore every thing of this kind, must have been employed in order to an easier apprehension, and a deeper feeling, of the source from which the benefit proceeded. It was chiefly to give such an apprehension, and excite such a feeling, that miraculous works were wrought; and that end could not have been more infallibly secured, than by enduing with supernatural efficacy, an instrumental means which, in itself, was utterly inefficacious. It was obviously, by no general law, that a benefit thus conferred had been accomplished; nor would it require any reasoning to establish the belief, that the virtue which had so wonderfully imbodyed itself in a material vehicle, could be no less than a real and substantive influence from the divine omnipotence.

Was it not then if possible, still more requisite, that a like apprehension, and a like feeling, should be insured, respecting the highest and holiest communication that had

ever proceeded from God to man? Estimating the blessing conveyed in the Eucharist, by the united representation of our Lord, and of St. Paul, can we suppose that any suitable means would be omitted of attesting the divinity of that blessing to our reason and natural feelings? And what could be more suitable than that the same expedient, which had been employed to impress human feeling with the sense of divine operation, in so many inferior instances, should be employed for the same necessary purpose, in the very highest instance in which man, while on this earth, was to be the subject of divine operation, and the receiver of supernatural blessings?

Instead, therefore, of questioning the literal import of St. Paul's expressions, shall we not rather recognize in that import the uniformity of the divine proceedings; and the depth of that wisdom which, not more for the humbling of the proud, than for the consolation of the humble, continues, in the sublimest instance on this side of heaven, to make the weakness of the instrument an irrefragable evidence, that the blessing received is directly and purely from himself?

The assurance of this fact is invaluable ; and it would be impossible to imagine any more suitable way, in which such assurance could have been given. It leaves to faith its entire exercise, inasmuch as no extraordinary impression is made either on the external or the internal sense ; but it exercises faith in the highest and happiest manner, by presenting to it an object, which in its nature, and in its nearness, must be felt to unite heaven with earth, and God with man. Such is the reckoning which even reason must make, if the actual transmission of divine influence through the elements be once admitted. We doubtless *can* conceive heavenly influence to be communicated without any medium whatever ; but we *cannot* conceive a spiritual influence conveyed through such material mediums, to be any other than heavenly and divine.

§

But in addition to what we may deduce from the general method of the divine proceedings, and from the reason of the case, do we not find by actual experience, that such an unequivocal pledge of divine ope-

ration was necessary to preserve the belief of such operation "whole and undefiled" in the Christian Church? The fact of strictly supernatural grace, though in itself so consolatory, is retained with difficulty in the sceptical mind of man. It has, accordingly, been modified in various ways by some persons, and boldly rejected by others. To establish, therefore, an ordinance, in the obvious aspect and consistent import of which, the doctrine of strictly supernatural grace should ever have a divine attestation, was to perpetuate this most important point of faith in the surest and most practical manner. It provided for the close and candid Christian reasoner, imperishable premises leading to the most certain conclusions; and it afforded to the simply devout, an instruction through the senses to the mind, which would teach deeper things than language could convey, and make an impression on the inmost feelings, of which their indistinct apprehension would neither abate the awfulness, nor substantially prevent the utility.

It is, on the contrary, to be remarked, that where the notion of the Lord's Supper

has been such, as to exclude the instrumental efficacy of the sacramental symbols, the ordinance itself has appeared to lose its interest and attractiveness. Of this fact, we have decisive evidence in a complaint, made by the pious Doddridge, in one of his sermons to young persons, wherein he invites religious youth to early communion. “I have frequently found,” he says, “and I believe it has been the experience of many of my brethren in the ministry, that young persons, not only of a very sober and regular conduct, but even those who have appeared most deeply impressed with the concerns of their souls, and experimentally acquainted, so far as we can judge, with regenerating grace, have in many instances shewn a strange coldness to this blessed institution; and we have known not a few, who have grown old in the neglect of it!” But whence this indifference, which the worthy Doddridge so candidly acknowledges, and so sincerely laments? Did it not arise from his, and his brethren’s, view of the Lord’s Supper, as a mere commemorative and covenanting transaction, in which grace was to be, as in other religious ordinances, exercised and

improved ; but no special communication of heavenly influence to be expected ? Had the Eucharist been regarded as a divinely instituted conduit of supernatural grace, directly from its fountain, could such persons as Doddridge describes, have been remiss in their attendance ? In that case, would not their love and value of the Lord's Supper be in exact proportion to their love and value of religion itself ? But whenever the strictly supernatural influence of the Eucharist is overlooked or unacknowledged, (and such will naturally, if not necessarily, be the consequence of rejecting the mysterious designation of the symbols), attention to this Christian ordinance, will be little more than gratuitous ; a natural effect perhaps of Christian ardour, because it is matter of divine injunction, but not a necessary result of Christian sincerity. It is in this view of it, merely a positive law of Christianity, acting exclusively upon the feelings of fear, of duty, or of gratitude. Contemplated as the actual vehicle of Christ's own ineffable influences to the capable receiver, it becomes a matter of intrinsic interest, to neglect which would be to neglect both present and everlasting salvation.

Besides, the sacred Eucharist, when thus conceived, becomes not only more attractive to the upright Christian, but also much more consolatory. When this holy ordinance is supposed to rise above the other means of grace, not by any appropriate influence of omnipotent power, but only by its more direct reference to the mercy and goodness of the dying Redeemer, the Christian, in partaking of it, can expect benefit, only in proportion to the actual state of his devotional feelings. Let his confidence in the promised grace of Christ be ever so sincere, his hope of a fresh communication will rise or fall with the conscious ardour, or the conscious coldness of his affections. But these not being at human command, and seldom or never moving in exact proportion to the settled purposes of the heart, the consequence, on the whole, will naturally be, that when animating influences are most needed, they will be least expected. Whereas, if there be a persuasion, that divine grace is communicated in and through the Sacrament, by a special exercise of Divine Power, it will follow that, not an inability to co-operate, but solely an incapa-

city to receive, will obstruct the communication.⁷

The importance of this distinction, I humbly conceive, will be felt by every one, who has religiously inspected himself. In efforts of the heart to rise toward God, *to will* may be most sincerely present with us, when, how to perform that which is good, we find not. Even in an advanced stage of piety, there may be least power of mental exertion, when its sensible necessity is greatest; for instance, under infirmity of body or mind; or when some distressing

⁷ It is not possible, within such narrow limits as I have prescribed to myself, to guard the thought expressed in this paragraph, against the danger of misapprehension. To answer this purpose, I must have gone into something like digression, which would have perplexed the thread of my discourse. I will therefore merely observe, that I proceed upon a principle of the Catholic Church, rested in by the Revisers of our Liturgy in 1661, when conferring, previously, with the Non-Conformist Divines—namely, that “God’s sacraments have their effects, where the receiver doth not *ponere obicem*, put any bar against them.”—Account of the proceedings of the Commissioners of both persuasions, &c.—Page 99.

event has caused what St. Peter calls, "heaviness through manifold temptations." How comfortable, then, amid this "weakness of our mortal nature," to reflect, not only that God *can* internally aid and strengthen us by his own secret influences, independently of our active co-operation, but that he has assured us of this unspeakable blessing, by such a permanent pledge and means of its accomplishment, as, by its very character and nature, supersedes all co-operation, and solely requires the faculty of reception. If only we are athirst, we have here a fountain of life, to which we may indeed come, without money and without price; and which comes to us without any diluting intermixture, as immediately flowing from the throne of God, and of the Lamb.

But this view of the Lord's Supper, not only ministers to encouragement, where encouragement is wanting, but it also serves to repress all spiritual pride, and undue self-gratulation. It is observable that those sincere maintainers of God's effectual grace, who do not regard the Eucharist as the actual conduit of its conveyance, deem it ne-

cessary to guard the supposed possessors of that grace, against robbing God of his honour, by ascribing to themselves, what they owe to his bounty. And there can be no doubt, that such a false reckoning is much more than incidental, where the view is directed only to those means of grace, in which the human faculties so co-operate, as to make it impossible to draw a distinct line between what supervenient grace does in the transaction, and what man does for himself. But wherever the Eucharist is considered as the appropriate vehicle of the animating and strengthening grace of Christ to man, such cautions as those adverted to, will hardly be requisite.

He who clearly and confidently expects to receive, in “the cup of blessing which is blessed, the communion of Christ’s blood,” and in “the bread which is broken, the communion of Christ’s body,” will naturally and necessarily depreciate all that he could do for himself, in comparison with that transcendent communication. In the sublime simplicity of the Eucharistic institution, the humble expectant of heavenly blessing is abstracted

form all human agency, of others, or of himself. The solemn words, used from the earliest times in both the eastern and western church, and through the distinguishing providence of God, preserved in our own, "*Sursum corda*," and the reply of the faithful "*Habemus ad Dominum*,"⁸ speak the one common feeling infallibly excited by "discerning the Lord's body" in the consecrated symbols, and, by consequence, looking for the blessing exclusively from him, who makes those elements "the hiding of his power."⁹ The mind thus impressed will feel no tendency to ascribe to itself the benefits it may have received. If spiritual life be consciously felt to gain strength and ascendancy, the fixed belief of a sacramental conveyance of that life will at once increase the feeling of delight, and of humility—of delight, because the influences thus communicated, are so purely from the Godhead itself, as to imply a real commencement, as well as certain pledge of everlasting beatitude; of humility, because the direct

⁸ "Lift up your hearts! R. We lift them up unto the Lord."

⁹ Habakkuk, iii. 4.

and unmixed apprehension of the divine power and presence, which the discernment of the Lord's body in the symbols must imply, cannot but impress upon the mind of man such a sense of his own comparative baseness and nothingness, and inspire such an habitual and deep sobriety, as could not be conceived equally producible through any other existing means in this lower world.

And as the lowliness thus infused is of the same nature with that of angels, and has in it no tendency to superstitious weakness, so the satisfaction which is enjoyed, has no relation to enthusiastic illusion. This latter is always the offspring of a supposed distinguishing communication from God; a peculiar afflatus, as it is imagined, by the mere will of the Spirit; and not subject to be controuled even by the clearest rules of scripture. But however elevating the idea of the Eucharistic intercourse with God, the mind is hereby raised to no giddy height; the elevation, which must be experienced, under a full apprehension of this divine provision, is as sober as it is sublime. The vouchsafement is neither personal nor partial; but extended to every

capable member of the Christian Church ; the apparatus is such, as to act neither on the sensitive nor the passionate feelings, but solely on the purest perceptions of the mind, and the soundest sensibilities of the heart ; and the adorable agency itself has nothing in it akin to the whirlwind, the earthquake, or the fire ; but in this instance operates as in the great economy of visible nature, with the same silence as in causing the earth to vegetate, or the planets to move in their orbits through the heavens. Need it then be said, that the glare of the meteor does not differ more from the light of the sun, than the transports of the enthusiast differ from those exalted apprehensions, which deep views of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper must naturally both awaken, and sustain, in every devout mind and heart.

§

I have already adverted to the mysterious communication which the Eucharist imparts, being a pledge of the same divine presence in and with the Christian Church, as the Jewish Church had enjoyed in the inner sanctuary of its Temple. But on this

particular point, I must beg leave to offer a few additional observations.

I observed, that such a communication of divine influence as could be effected only by the omnipotent power of our Redeemer, must also of necessity imply his special and extraordinary presence; and I inferred that the Apostles and their brethren would thus feel themselves amply compensated for that noblest of all Jewish privileges, the special residence of Jehovah in the midst of his people; inasmuch as in the Eucharistic institution, estimated as our Lord himself had taught them, their mental eye, would recognize a Shechinah, as real as that which had taken possession of the Holy of Holies at the dedication of the Temple built by Solomon.

To illustrate the importance of this particular consideration, may it not be remarked, that though the omnipresence of God is a most awful and momentous truth, yet, even in the best disposed minds, the sense, merely of this presence, however it must excite philosophical reverence, would scarcely awaken filial affection? Then only

can we contemplate God as our father, when we have assurance that he regards us as his children; and that we are distinctly and individually within the gracious notice, and under the direct influence, of our Almighty parent.

The patriarchs of old were, doubtless, firm in their belief of the divine omnipresence.¹ But this alone would scarcely have

¹ The degree and manner in which pious persons, under the Jewish dispensation, were impressed with the divine omnipresence, is admirably exemplified in the 139th Psalm. But the question is, could that great truth have been either so practically felt, or so magnificently descanted on, except where the established fact of a special presence gave it animation and sustenance?

The prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, (1 Kings, viii.) also contains as sublime a recognition of the Divine omnipresence, as could be expressed in words (v. 27); and yet every subsequent portion of that noble piece of devotional eloquence, gives evidence of the confidence and consolation, which the devout king derived from the anticipation of a *pecially present God*, who thus, in boundless mercy, adapted his infinitude to the apprehensions and affections of his limited and dependent creatures.

supported them, when they “went forth, “not knowing whither they went.” Their supreme consolation arose from the persuasion that the eye of God was specially upon them, and the hand of God directly and effectively with them; to which happy confidence they had been raised, by such manifestations of his special presence repeatedly made to them, as were, at the time, a matter of unutterable comfort, and left behind them a “home-felt delight,” and “sober certainty,” which no earthly circumstances were sufficient to destroy.

In those instances, the awe of infinite Deity was necessarily felt; but this naturally overwhelming sentiment was softened into unutterable peace and joy by such undelusive demonstrations of the Friend and the Father. Hence the very places where those manifestations had been made, became dear to the patriarchs. To those memorable scenes they loved to return, that they might there offer up their homage with excited recollection, deeper gratitude, and more sensible consolation.

The care which was taken to continue to

the posterity of the patriarchs the same substantial demonstration of a specially present God, has been already dwelt upon ; and nothing additional need be said to shew, that this exercise of divine condescension was carried to its utmost height in the incarnation of the Eternal Word ; all former tokens or evidences of the special presence of Jehovah being, in comparison with the actual advent of Emmanuel, God with us, but preparatives and prelibations.

Taking, then, this long-continued, and at length consummated condescension of God, to that nature which he had given to man, into our consideration ; and keeping in view the entire sameness of human nature under the Christian, as under the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations ; can we imagine that when the Godhead had come nearest, and had most intimately familiarized itself with man, all substantive intercourse with our Emmanuel was thenceforward to cease, and that the highest dispensation should wholly want that natural satisfaction, with which lower dispensations had been so signally favoured ; and which, while man possessed the same organization of spirit, soul and

body, could never cease to be panted after, and virtually demanded?

That the Incarnate Word, after finishing the work of his humiliation, should no longer manifest himself to the external senses, was declared by himself to be expedient, as requisite to that spiritual course in which his disciples were from that time to proceed. But it was essential to this very design, that they should consider him as withdrawn from their bodily senses only, and that as far as their exigencies required, he would still be as really present with them, as in the days of his flesh.

But, to establish this assurance, some divine pledge was indispensable. Without some token, by which his special approach to them should be notified, and on their recurrence to which, they might confide, that he would be invisibly present with them, to aid and bless them, as effectually as if they saw him in the midst of them—without such a provision, I say, the Christian dispensation would have had no adequate security against such vagueness of apprehension, and coldness of affection, as would have sunk it far

below the level of Jewish devotion. The mind of Christians in that case could have rationally contemplated the divine *omnipresence* alone, and the piety of the intelligent and sober-minded could have been little better than a more definite, and more firmly grounded natural religion. For those who had more reason than affection, such a system might have sufficed. But, if we may say it with due reverence, however the diffusive rays of Deity, may not only afford light, but excite a degree of warmth in the spiritual, like those of the sun, in the material world; still in the one case as in the other, it is not diffusion of rays, but the concentration of them, which produces a melting ardour.

That the apprehension merely of divine omnipresence, should not be adequate to the mental exigencies of man is the less to be doubted, as it would seem to be insufficient for maintaining the devotion even of higher intelligences. We read in the book of Job, that there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord; and that there was another day, when they did the same. Intimations of

a like kind are numerous in the Old Testament, and if we attend to what is said in the Apocalypse, we shall find them still more abundant in the New. Doubtless, we can know but little of these heavenly mysteries; still the uniform fact of a Special Presence in the invisible world is indisputable; and would it not seem to be almost a self-evident truth that finite minds, however exalted, can apprehend the Godhead with a satisfaction proportioned to their nature, only by means of a definite manifestation?

That this exigence is increased in man by his terrestrial nature, needs no proof: It is obvious that in this world, the entire movement of things is adapted to that nature, and thus our innate tendencies and our external circumstances unite to limit and modify our mental action, be the object of that action ever so exalted.

Accordingly, if we examine ourselves, we shall perceive that in whatever concerns us, we require definite matter of fact, on which to repose our minds, as much as we need some solid substance to support our bodies. It is of no essential moment, through what

species of evidence the matter of fact is notified to us, if only the notification have clear marks of authenticity. Hence, in human affairs there is always more or less exercise of what may fairly be called faith, but always on an understood or supposed ground of unequivocal reality.

That the various evidences of our divine religion, and particularly the holy Scriptures are most wisely and graciously adapted to these habits of the human mind, is indisputable. But whether the utmost plenitude of recorded testimony would meet all our mental exigencies, either as finite or as animalized beings, appears a matter of much less easy determination. It would rather seem that, to consult fully for our finite, and still more for our terrestrial nature, in addition to all other provisions, there would be need of some impressive and demonstrative pledge and token of the continued direct intercourse of the all-gracious Being with his human servants. Such a pledge and token would completely meet the demand of human nature for matter of fact assurance. And if the expediency of supplying that demand could not otherwise

be proved, it might be inferred from what has been already adverted to ; I mean the striking tendency of those, by whom the notion of any such pledge and token is rejected, either to think illusively of the direct intercourse of God with the human spirit, or else utterly to deny its reality.

But in following the light of our Redeemer and the guidance of his Apostle, do we not find in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, just such a pledge and token of the special presence, and real influence of our God and Saviour, as at once meets the demand of our nature, and suits the high aim and intellectual spirit of the Christian dispensation? That life of faith by which, as Christians, we gradually rise on the moral scale, would have been counteracted, had any impression been made on the senses ; whereas the absence of every such impression preserves the moral evidence of reality from delusive mixture, and fits the mind for the most sober perception of its practical influence. The great point, to which every circumstance in the institution bears witness, is, that the cup of blessing which is blessed, is the communion of the Lord's blood, and that

the bread which is broken, is the communion of his body. But reason must pronounce that earthly elements can serve so high and holy a purpose only as instruments of the divine power ; and in such an exercise of the divine power, the special presence of the Almighty agent, according to all our habits of thinking, is necessarily implied. In yielding to the force of St. Paul's first position, we are directly led to this impressive conclusion. And its unutterable weight and interest must concur with the infinite value of the communicated blessing, to deepen the effect upon every human feeling.

In this view, as often as we approach the table of the Lord, we may account ourselves to have admission, in a manner beyond human conception, into the presence chamber of the King Messiah. Under the full sense of this Christian privilege, we shall not need a Bethel, a Peniel, the Jewish sanctuary, or even its Holy of Holies. In contemplating with St. Paul, the mystery of the Eucharist, the Christian cannot but see, that in this sacred ordinance, especially and most eminently, " a new and living way " is opened for him (far above what was granted

even to the Jewish High Priest,) to “enter
“into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

Is it then, too much to say, that the Eucharist, thus apprehended, makes the richest provision which we could conceive to be made by any stated means, in this lower world, for our spiritual sustenance and comfort? While as a pledge and token of divine presence and influence, its authenticity never can be impaired—its significancy, to close and sober attention, never obscured, its invisible mystery will be as wonderful, as impressive, and as inestimable, in its latest as in its earliest celebration. The communion of the Lord’s blood, and the communion of the Lord’s body, must have, as terms, the same profound import—as blessings, the same infinite value, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Let not, therefore, the simplicity of what is visible to our bodily sight, veil from our mental eye those invisible realities, which are to us so consolatory, and in themselves so glorious. On the contrary, let us recognize the same spirit of meek majesty, which veiled its transcendent brightness in the mystery of the incarnation, as still continuing the like gra-

cious condescension in the mystery of the Eucharist ; and let us joyfully and reverently approach to do homage to our King, who in this his own peculiar institution, comes to diffuse benediction in his mystical Zion, with the same apparent lowliness, as when in conformity with the divine prediction, he entered his literal Jerusalem “sitting upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”

§

I might now proceed, in the way of contrast, to remark more particularly on those views of the Lord's Supper, which stand opposed to the explanation attempted in these pages. I might, possibly, shew that by rejecting the mysterious instrumentality of the symbols, and thereby reducing the sacrament itself, externally to a mere ceremony, and internally to an act of common Christian devotion, besides the liberty thus taken with holy Scripture, the Eucharistic celebration at once loses all its proportioned hold, (proportioned I mean to its high origin,) on the natural reason, as well as on the natural feelings of man. But these would be, in some sort, controversial topics ;

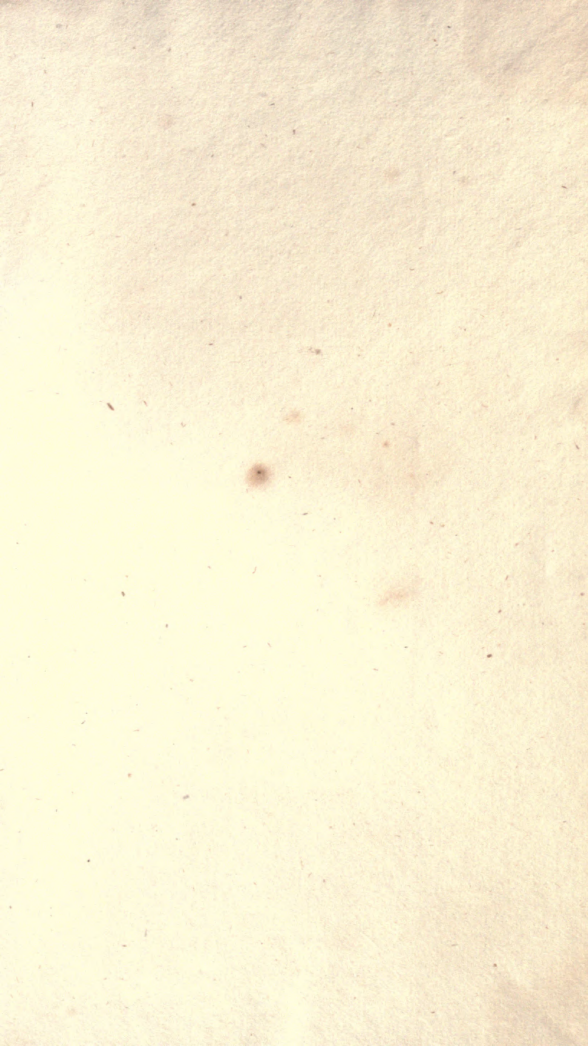
and I trust the grounds on which the claims of the sacred Eucharist have been shewn to rest, do not need to be defended by such auxiliaries.

I might also pursue still farther, the line of observation, which I have been following. I might speak of that general influence on the whole mass of professing Christians, which might be looked for, from the doctrine of St. Paul respecting the Lord's Supper, being literally received, and adequately promulgated. I might shew, that by this means, those who are yet insensible to the goodness and wisdom of God, manifested in the gospel, would be obliged to recognize another of His divine attributes, before which the hardest heart must bow, (His almighty power,) as in direct and continued exercise within the Christian sanctuary ; and I might support the justness of this reckoning, by appealing to the precise purpose for which St. Paul introduced those invaluable declarations, and the manner in which he enforces them. I might dwell upon the indescribable light and warmth, which all the other solemn services of religion would be felt to derive from such a central sphere of divine presence and opera-

tion ; and which would even make each hallowed roof to impress him who should come under it, with the feeling of Jacob at Bethel, —“ How dreadful is this place ! This is none other than the house of God ; this is the gate of heaven !! ”

But I forbear. I have said enough for my special purpose ; and if it gives satisfaction in the quarter, from whence the thought of examining the subject was received, the pleasure I have felt in the employment, will be deeply enhanced by such a reward.

tion; and which would even make each half-
 fowled foot to impress him who should come
 under it, with the feeling of Jacob at Bethel,
 —“How dreadful is this place! This is
 none other than the house of God; this is
 the gate of heaven!” and we have seen
 But I forbear. I have said enough for my
 especial purpose; and it gives satisfaction in
 the quarter, from whence the thought of
 examining the subject was received. The
 pleasure I have felt in the execution, will
 be happily rewarded by reading a word.









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